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THE EARLY HISTORY  
OF THE  
English Woollen Industry.

BY

W. J. ASHLEY, M. A.,

FELLOW OF LINCOLN COLLEGE,

Lecturer in Lincoln and Corpus Christi Colleges,

OXFORD.

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AMERICAN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION.

SEPTEMBER, 1887.

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THE EARLY HISTORY  
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## PREFACE.

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The following essay has grown out of a paper read before the Oxford Economic Society in the January of this year. It deals with a strictly limited subject : it does not, save incidentally, touch the history of the raw material, its production, quality and price; nor that of the finished article after it has passed into the hands of the dealers. It is with the intermediate stages that we are here concerned—the position, organization, relations among themselves, of those actually engaged in the manufacture.

I cannot but be sensible of the honor which the American Economic Association have done me by permitting me to join in their work. American economic writing is attracting increasing attention from the younger generation of Englishmen ; they look to America to contribute in the future far more largely to the solution of social problems than is possible for the mother country. For the United States have obvious advantages, both in the material they offer and in their means for dealing with that material. In the first place, that country exhibits the forces of competition and capital working on a larger scale than elsewhere, and in a freer field, uncrossed by any of the influences of decaying feudalism. Hence the importance to Europe as well as to America of the questions which are forcing themselves to the front in the United States—such questions as those of Rings and Monopolies, of Railway



Management, of Labor Societies, of Large and Small Farming. Karl Marx, twenty years ago, described England as the classic land of capitalist production ; that is a title that no longer belongs to her.

In the second place, while in England political economy has altogether lost the ear of the public, and its official teachers may be counted on the fingers of one hand, in the United States it is a subject of increasing interest to the educated world, and the professors of the many colleges and the officers of the statistical bureaus form a considerable body of competent investigators. The zeal of American students has sent them to the German universities, whence they have brought back a new enthusiasm and a new method. Yet from the dangers of servile imitation they are freed by their position. Not even the absurd exaggerations of German writers themselves can obscure the fact that it is from Germany that the impulse has come in our own time to a new and more fruitful development in Economics. But certainly no observer of German thought can fail to see that, though most vigorous within its range, its range is exceedingly narrow. German writers seldom realize the atmosphere of individual initiative in which English and American thought moves ; and while they are acquainted with the latest doctoral dissertation, they are often totally ignorant of all English economical work since Mill's *Principles*. But American teachers will be compelled, by the traditions of their country, the needs of their pupils, and the criticisms of their opponents, to give due weight to the forces of competition and to the arguments of the more recent English economists. Thus a body of men are beginning to appear

as familiar with Cairnes and Bagehot as with Knies and Schmoller, with Bismarck's legislation as with Trades-Unionism and Coöperation.

The "new school" in America has had the best of all testimony to its stimulating qualities in the grave rebukes with which it has been met. This is not the place to speak of the criticisms which have been directed against the claim of "the new Political Economy" to an *ethical* character, or against its insistence on the functions of the *state*. So far as the *historical* method, however, is concerned, it must be said that there seems some danger lest the real character of the divergence of opinion should escape attention in unnecessary contentions about preliminaries. The question at issue between the deductive and historical economists is not that of the truth or falsehood of the main Ricardian doctrines. There is a difference of emphasis, a difference of tone, but not a difference in ultimate belief concerning them. From the side of the abstract economists it is now freely granted that these doctrines are only hypothetically true, that they are true only so far as certain conditions are granted. From the other side, however much disposition there may be to deny that the conditions are ever completely realized, it is confessed that so far as they are realized the doctrines based upon them are true. To continue fighting upon this ground is only to slay the slain. Where the real divergence begins is upon the question what use is to be made of these doctrines, which after all every economist accepts and accepts in the same sense. The "orthodox" say: "True, they do not exactly correspond with real life, but they express tendencies far greater than any other. The proper course

to pursue is to work them out to their farthest consequences; and then, by introducing additional considerations, we shall see how these modify our conclusions, until finally we shall get results which will tally with facts." The historical economist, on the other hand, argues that the actual state of affairs in every particular industry, trade, country, and how it came to be so, is best discovered by historical and statistical inquiry—an inquiry in which the old doctrines will furnish a useful standard of comparison, and in some cases suggest influences that have been at work, but in which they will after all play a quite subordinate part.

What is most wanted at this moment is that each side should frankly and ungrudgingly recognize the right of the other to try the opposite method. No doubt, in the heat of revolt, rebels have spoken violently, and have denounced the deductive method and all its works. This is hardly to be wondered at when it is remembered that the political economy most influential in England and America during this century has been that taught by McCulloch and Senior. But the orthodox economist of to-day no longer thinks that he is in possession of a body of truths applicable to all times and places; and he is even too anxious to point out that he does not claim to give practical advice. The historian, therefore, will do well to acknowledge that deduction is a defensible method, and to leave the believer in abstract economics to justify his argumentation by its results.

But it is time that it should be recognized from the other side that, for good or evil, there is an increasing body of economic investigators who are likely to

remain unmoved by all the arguments which, from the time of *some unsettled questions*, have been used to prove that deduction is the only scientific method. They believe that by historical and statistical inquiry it is possible for them to arrive at a knowledge of the economic life of the past and present which will be of service to society. They are not content with the concession that the historical material they gather may be of use for the "illustration and verification of economic truth;" they believe it has an independent value of its own. If they are wise they will neither patronize nor be patronized, but will ask for a fair field.

There is one question, indeed, that is often put, and deserves an answer: Can historical and statistical inquiry discover economic *truth*, economic *laws*? This is another illustration of the hold that the Ricardian political economy has taken on men's minds. For by "truth" is here meant, unconsciously perhaps, a number of neat abstract propositions, professing to explain large bodies of phenomena, such as "Rent is the excess of the return of a piece of land above that on the worst land in cultivation." Truth of this sort the historical method is not likely to discover; the history of agriculture will help us to understand present agricultural difficulties, but it will scarcely produce a formula professing to be a "law of rent." But if by "truth" is meant such generalizations about the condition of things now and the direction in which they are going, as are of practical value to the politician or philanthropist, then historical inquiry has discovered truth, and will discover yet more.

LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD,  
August 8, 1887.

# THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH WOOLLEN INDUSTRY.

By W. J. ASHLEY, M. A.

MONOGRAPH, VOL. II. NO. 4.

## ERRATA.

THE fact that the writer has been unable to revise the proof-sheets has led to a plentiful crop of errata. As some of these alter the sense, it is hoped that the reader will begin with glancing through them and making the necessary corrections.

- P. 11, l. 2, *read* "*Some Unsettled Questions.*"  
 13, 10, *after* thus *delete* ,  
 14, 3, *for* needs *read* need.  
 15, 3, *from* bottom, *after* Tucher *delete* —  
 16, 9, *from* bottom, *for* Rolls *read* Roll; l. 1, *from* bottom, *for* Wirthschaftliche *read* Wirthschaftliche, *for* ausgange *read* Ausgange.  
 19, 19, *for* latter *read* later.  
     6, *from* bottom, *for* quad *read* quod; l. 3, *from* bottom, *for* Maddox *read* Madox; l. 2, *from* bottom, *delete* ( ) *before* and *after* Gilda Mercatoria.  
 21, 18, *insert* marks of quotation *before* no one, and *also* in l. 20, *after* hommes and *before* and *after* of the town; ll. 27 and 33, *for* Beverly *read* Beverley; l. 29, *for* House *read* Hanse;  
 22, bottom, *for* Stallaguim: Praetatio *read* Stallagium: Præstatio.  
 23, 4, *for* eariler *read* earlier.  
     3, *from* bottom, *for* tintetos *read* tintcos.  
 25, 7, *from* bottom, *for* Guilda *read* Gilda.  
 26, bottom, *for* Custumaram *read* Customarum.  
 27, 3, *from* bottom, *for* chescum *read* chescun.  
 28, 14, *delete* , *after* instance; l. 23, *read* ; *for* , *after* tailors; l. 31, *for* telarie *read* telarii.  
 29, 14, *from* bottom, *for* Oe *read* Qe; l. 5, *from* bottom, *for* Telarie *read* Telarii.  
 30, 12, *from* bottom, *for* magistre *read* magistri.  
 31, 1, *for* the evidence *read* other evidence.  
 32, 21, *for* or *read* nor; bottom, *for* Maddox *read* Madox.  
 33, 14, *delete* , *after* existed; l. 19, *for* connot *read* cannot; last line but one *delete* 2, and *for* 16 *read* Ib.  
 34, 16, *after* safely *insert* and; l. 19, *for* follow *read* fall; l. 29, *for* us *read* no.  
 38, 15, *for* low countries *read* Low Countries; last line but one, *for* Dodge *read* Lodge; last line, *for* Astevelde *read* Artevelde.

- P. 39, l. 13, *after* how *delete* ,  
 40, 2, from bottom, *for* Et *read* et.  
 46, 9, *for* empaneled *read* empaneled.  
 47, 19, *for* low countries *read* Low Countries.  
 49, 10, from bottom, *for* entranlos *read* extraneos; *for* sud  
*read* sua.  
 50, 24, 25, *for* Weavers' *read* Weavers; l. 26, *for* pannoe' *read*  
 pannor'; l. 28, *for* Frauchises *read* Fraunchises.  
 51, 22-3, and n. 2. This interpretation of the word *chamber*  
 is mistaken. On comparing the ordinances of  
 other companies given in the *Memorials* (e. g. of  
 the Pelterers, p. 329), it is clear that it refers to  
 the Guildhall; and the meaning here apparently  
 is that persons who have caused affrays shall be  
 tried at the Guildhall, and shall not be excused  
 from the fine on the ground that they have already  
 paid a fine to the Sheriffs.  
 53, 9, from bottom, *for* Col. *read* Cal.  
 54, 10, *for* country *read* county; l. 29, *for* pannorun *read* pan-  
 norum.  
 58, bottom, *for* Tucker *read* Tucher.  
 59, 16. This seems too strongly expressed, as also the state-  
 ment at the top of p. 63. It is clear from a Lei-  
 ceester ordinance of 1257 (see Thompson, *History of*  
*Leicester*), ordering that, of the merchants from  
 that town attending the fair of S. Botolph, the  
 clothiers (pannarii?) should stand on the southern  
 side of the market and the wooldealers on the  
 northern, that there were already a number of  
 merchants selling cloth and nothing else. But  
 the class of dealers in cloth was certainly not con-  
 siderable until the middle of the 14th century.  
 60, last line but one, *for* paravia *read* pararia.  
 61, last line but two, *for* ende *read* Ende.  
 62, 22, *for* § § *read* pp; l. 27, *for* Eisserands *read* Tisserands.  
 67, 3, from bottom, *after* acts *for* , *read* of; *next line add* ,  
*after* translation.  
 68, 20, *for* on *read* as.  
 70, 6, from bottom, *for* , *read* ; *after* woole. *After* wool *read* ,  
 71, 10, *for* this *read* its.  
 72, 3, from bottom, *for* staple *read* stable.  
 73, 11, from bottom, *for* , *read*; *after* distinct.  
 74, 17, from bottom, *for* exists *read* exist.  
 3, from bottom, *for* Handecraft *read* Handicraft.  
 76, 4, from bottom, *delete* , *after* evidence.  
 77, 16, *add* quotation marks *after* people and *delete* them *after*  
 unreasonable, l. 22.  
 78, 10, *for* devise *read* device; l. 24, *for* enacted *read* exacted.  
 79, 13, *add* , *after* sons; l. 17, *for* ; *read* ,  
 80, 16, from bottom, *delete* , *after* land; l. 9, from bottom, *read*  
 Ochenkowski, England's Wirthschaftliche Ent-  
 wicklung; l. 3, from bottom, *for* grass *read* graze;  
 and *delete* , *after* feed.  
 82, 5, from bottom, *for* mention *read* mentions.  
 85, 19, *for* two and three *read* second and third.